

Imagine a warm sunny day in southwestern Oregon hiking an interpretive nature trail near the historic Rogue River. A friend told you about the McGregor Park and visitor center near the base of Lost Creek Lake and William Jess Dam years ago and now you are enjoying a leisurely stroll. You've been walking for close to half a mile and are wondering how to find the parking lot and restroom near the new playground. Just then your child squeals with delight in finding an interpretive directional sign pointing the way. It's reassuring to know your way through the woods and that excitement of anticipation re-sparks as a bridge with numbered plaque comes into view. You encourage the youngest in your group to help find the number on the brochure, available at the visitor center, which directs to points of interest along the trail just like this one noting pond turtle habitat and another stating salmon fingerling viewing.

McGregor Park is managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and is co-managed through an interpretive staffing partnership with the Medford District BLM. The park is approximately 18 wooded acres await visitors to enjoy over 20 picnic sites, clean restrooms, an environmentally themed visitor center, handicap accessible fishing platforms, and about a mile of accessible interpretive trails.

Until about a year ago visitors would find their own way around the trails. "Visitors would ask directions on how get back to the visitor center or which way the restrooms were almost every day during the recreation season" says park ranger Edward Amerson. It was questions like that which helped the ranger staff come up with the idea of a directional interpretive themed trail at the park. The trail had been established for over 20 years with thousands of visitors each year. We really wanted to provide a better sense of security while folks were out on the trail which at times feels like you're out in the deep woods.

The ranger staff agreed this was a fantastic way to utilize the national Handshake Agreement Grant Program. We reached out to our regional partners and quickly realized mutual benefit for proceeding with this project. Our first partner was the Eagle Point High school and their woodshop. Ken Welburn, Eagle Point Woodshop instructor (now retired), was glad to facilitate the partnership as it meant a long term and meaningful project for his students. The students were ready for the task as they had been learning a new computer controlled router recently installed in the woodshop. The second partner was the Upper Rogue Watershed Association (URWA). Pete Mazzini with URWA along with volunteers came out to complete final touches including painting of the new signs.

This project is an excellent example of combined effort engaging several user groups and volunteers of all ages. URWA was able to continue its long history of support to watershed related efforts in the Upper Rogue and Eagle Point High school students made a difference in their local community that will benefit users for years to come.

You've had a great time with the kids outdoors today and wonderful to see them learning maps and experiencing the points of interest in the park. These are the memories they will remember for a lifetime.